

Surviving Shadows - Afghan Art in the Face of Suppression

Curated by Yama Rahimi
January 16 - March 14, 2026

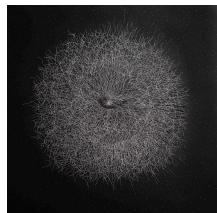
Angela Gulistani, *Hope in Darkness*, 2022 - 2025, still shot of an Animation, 1 min



This animation was created during the artist's long migration journey from Afghanistan to Germany. She produced them while waiting in Islamabad, Pakistan for her German visa. For her, Islamabad became a place suspended between a painful reality and the hope of a safer future.

A young girl stands barefoot with her back to the viewer, wearing a mint-green dress patterned with small red flowers over red pants. Her long brown braid hangs down her back. She raises one arm toward a cluster of veiled figures in blue, purple, green, and gold garments above her. In her other hand, she holds three books. A swirling, starry sky fills the background.

Farshad Akbari, *What is your dream?*, 2023, Rapid, stone, acrylic, scratch on wood, 24 x 24 in



A black square wood panel is covered with a dense white web of fine, branching lines radiating outward. At the center, a small stone is attached, surrounded by tightly clustered marks. Fine scratches are visible across the surface beneath the acrylic. The lines form an irregular circular mass, with longer strands extending outward, especially at the upper right. Tiny white dots scatter across the background.

Jahan Ara Rafi, *My story with Shamama*, 2025, mixed media on canvas, each 24 X 36 in



Three paintings, created in the aftermath of the artist's forced migration, depict stylized human figures with simplified facial features and closed eyes, painted in warm reds, pinks, and ochres.

One composition shows a dark-haired figure in a white garment holding small white flowers, set against a textured golden-brown background with an arched doorway and pale silhouettes.



Another portrait presents a seated figure with a long neck and black hair beside a framed white sheet marked with faint handwritten lines, surrounded by layered brushstrokes in beige and brown.

The third painting shows a bald figure resting their chin on one hand, with strong shadows across the face and a tall column-like form in the background.

Waisuddin Mohammadi, Untitled, 2021, Photoprint, 20 x 30 in



This work has been destroyed in Afghanistan. A painted figure in a red hooded garment stands against a cloudy gray sky. Long dark hair falls over one shoulder. The face is pale and covered with scattered black numbers and time-like markings. A large gray moon appears at upper left, partially veiled by clouds. Similar numeric text floats across the background, with patches of yellow light and ink-like dark forms.

Waisuddin Mohammadi, Untitled, 2021, Photoprint, each 30 x 20 in



This work has been destroyed in Afghanistan. A dark painting shows a group of black human silhouettes standing across the lower half of the image. Their bodies fade into shadowed streaks toward the bottom edge. Above them, a star-filled night sky spreads across the scene, with a cloudy band of pale blue and white light near the horizon. A large red circular form hangs in the upper center, partially obscured by haze.

Ayatollah Ahmadi, Qors e Jan, 2020, dried bread with varnish, each 11.8 X 11.8 in



Evacuated during the artist's escape, the artwork is a testament to both physical and cultural survival.

Six round, glazed bread disks hang by thin strings, their surfaces browned and glossy. Red and black calligraphic lines spiral across the crusts, with small punctured holes and occasional gold-leaf patches. One piece includes a blue-domed building and a small winged figure at the edge. Another features a circular photo portrait embedded at the center. An ornate floral medallion frames a small painted scene.

10 Anonymous Afghanistan based artists, 2015–2025



One of the most important parts of this exhibition is the digital archive. It includes works from artists who are still inside Afghanistan. Many cannot show their work publicly. Some cannot leave. They take enormous risks to document their art digitally and share it. These files cross borders when bodies cannot. They remind us that creativity survives – even in the darkest conditions.

Maryam Gholam Ali, Le/le, 2025, Multichannel video. 30 min



This multichannel video work features a childlike body engaged in repetitive, playful movements, evoking a lost memory that transcends time—belonging simultaneously to the past, present, and future.

Fatimah Hossaini, from *Beauty Amidst the Shadows of War*, 2015 - 2021, Photobook



The Beauty Amidst War is a photographic series dedicated to the women of Afghanistan – mothers, sisters, and daughters whose strength and beauty endure despite decades of conflict. Celebrating the country's rich cultural diversity, the portraits feature women from different ethnic groups, each wearing their traditional clothing with grace and pride.

Fatimah Hossaini, *Beauty Amidst the Shadows of War* series, Photography, 23.6 X 31.5 in



A woman stands at the base of a worn wooden staircase inside a dim, weathered building. She wears a brown cap with small purple motifs and a matching shawl draped around her shoulders and arms. Colorful fabric and jewelry peek out at her neckline and wrists. Her arms rest on a metal railing with curled details beside tiled steps.

Fatimah Hossaini, *Beauty Amidst the Shadows of War* series, Photography, 23.6 X 31.5 in



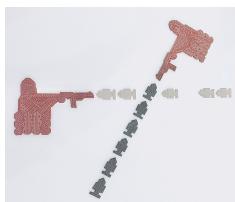
A woman (Atefe Amini) stands in a narrow interior passage framed by patterned textiles. She has short, dark curly hair and wears earrings, a tan shawl, and colorful embroidered cuffs. A large silver chest ornament with dangling pieces hangs over a dark top. To the left are stacked woven rugs and a geometric wall hanging. To the right hangs a red embroidered garment with a purple scarf.

Fatimah Hossaini, *Beauty Amidst the Shadows of War* series, Photography, 23.6 X 31.5 in



The artist sits in profile on a small chair in a stone courtyard framed by a narrow passageway. She wears a black draped garment and green pants with patterned cuffs, resting barefoot on a colorful woven rug. A bright headdress with red and green flowers rises above her dark hair. Behind her is a weathered wall with a wooden door and a single window.

Jeanno Gaussi, *Clay Weave* (fragment 1), 2025-ongoing, Ceramic, variable



This work reinterprets the traditional rug, an object deeply symbolic of comfort, protection.

Two soldier figures face each other on a white pedestal, aiming guns. The left red soldier points a long rifle to the right. The upper-right red soldier aims a handgun downward. Small bullets extend from each weapon: pale bullets travel horizontally across the center, while gray run diagonally downward in a staggered line.

Jeanno Gaussi, *THE PLACE WHERE LOST THINGS GO*, 2023 - 2024, Installation + Video



This installation repurposes the artist's late mother's glass bangles, symbols of cultural identity, beauty, and fragility—into a collection of glass bottles. These vessels contain anonymous memories gathered from displaced individuals, accompanied by imagined maps that weave together personal and collective histories.